

Serial No. 09/890,511

Page 9

REMARKS

Pursuant to the request of the Examiner, applicant includes a certified copy of DE 299 22 649.2. Applicant has amended the specification to remove references to the claims on page 4, page 6, and page 8.

In regard to the rejection of the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a), the Examiner is directed to Fig. 2, wherein a transition from a top edge of one lug to an adjacent lug is displayed in the form a circular arch indicated by Fig. 15. This disclosure of this feature is in compliance with 37 CFR 1.83(a) and the requirement for amended drawings should be withdrawn.

In response to the rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, Applicant has amended the preamble of the claims to be directed to "a panel connecting system". Additionally, Applicant has amended claim 1 to clearly define the panels as "first panel" and "second panel". Applicant has also amended claims 1, 2, and 4, to replace reference to "the lug" with "the lugs".

Applicant has amended the claims to clarify the term "the open end of the tongue" by changing it to "a distal end of the tongue". Further, "the other panel" has been amended to "second panel" to overcome the rejection based on lack of antecedent basis. Applicant has removed the language in Claim 1 concerning "the side of the tongue comprising the lugs comprises a recess". Instead, Applicant has rewritten this structure as new Claim 19 and has eliminated use of the term "recess" to describe the spacing created by the slope.

Serial No. 09/890,511

Page 10

Applicant has amended claim 2 to overcome the lack of antecedent basis for "the raised area at the open end of the flank" and "the recess which is formed by the lug". Applicant has also amended claim 4 to overcome the lack of antecedent basis for "the side wall of the recess". Applicant has amended claim 8 to clarify that the lugs project perpendicularly from the surface of "the second panel". Claims 9 and 10 have been amended to remove reference to "grooves" and "recesses" and are replaced with "groove" and "recess". Further, "recess" replaces "channels" in Claim 10 to overcome the rejection based on a lack of antecedent basis.

Claim 14 has been amended to specify "said tongue" instead of "at least one tongue" to overcome the rejection based on lack of antecedent basis. Claim 1, as amended, removes the limitation that the flank is rigid. Therefore, the limitation concerning the flank being elastic in claim 16 is proper and not inconsistent with Claim 1. Further, the method in Claim 18 has been amended to provide a series of steps using action verbs ending with "-ing".

Reconsideration of the rejection under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by DE 4242530 A1 (the "530 Patent") is respectfully requested.

The claims, as amended, are directed to a panel connecting system having a plurality of lugs arranged in one line parallel to the tongue wherein each lug "exhibits a space from an adjacent lug". The arrangement of the plurality of lugs in a parallel line with spaces between each lug reduces the overall contact surface of the lugs with the corresponding recess. This results in a reduction of the forces necessary to move the connected panels with respect to one another.

Serial No. 09/890,511

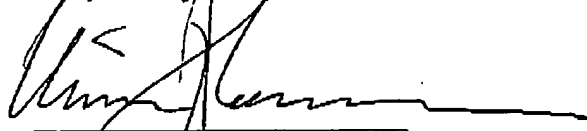
Page 11

In contrast, the '530 Patent is directed to a device having two elongated lugs parallel to each other. The elongated lugs in the '530 Patent do not have spaces between adjacent lugs. Instead, the elongated nature of the lugs increases the contact surface between the panels and leads to an increased resistance against movement of the panels with respect to each other.

The usage of spacing between a plurality of lugs arranged in a single parallel line is neither taught nor suggested by the '530 Patent. Rather, the '530 Patent teaches away from the subject invention by disclosing an elongated contact surface between panels which results in panels that are more easily loosened from each other. Accordingly, the rejection under Section 102(b) should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. An early notice to that effect is requested.

Respectfully Submitted



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